



State Board of Health Briefing in May 2004 Overview of Changes to chapter 246-360 WAC Transient Accommodations (TA)

The proposed rules outline the minimum public health and safety standards for the licensure and operations of transient accommodations in Washington State. Changes were minor, eased requirements, or imposed additional requirements. The Department's goal was to balance the economic impact on the industry with the importance of security and safety of the guests.

This overview includes the purpose for changing regulations, overview of stakeholders and public outreach efforts, and comments on proposed regulations.

A. Purpose for Changing Regulations

The regulations were last revised in 1994. The proposed revision to the regulations is intended to accomplish several tasks:

- **Changes to increase emphasis on security, safety, and emergency preparedness:**
 - Requiring development of a basic emergency preparedness plan
 - Providing emergency lighting to guests in the event of a power outage
 - Requiring unit doors to be equipped with a suitable lock, in compliance with State Building Code
 - Providing slip resistant appliques, mats or other devices in bathtubs and showers
- **Changes were made to reflect changes in the industry and operation of the program:**
 - Implementing 2004 legislation regarding annual license renewal dates
 - Outlining the Department's procedure for addressing deficiencies
 - Allowing replacement of bed linens weekly, rather than twice a week when guests stay longer than three days, as well as between guests
- **Changes to require compliance with regulatory standards mandated by other authorities:**
 - Requiring documentation of an approved water supply system
 - Requiring a copy of a current water recreation facility permit from the local health jurisdiction
 - Requiring hand washing facilities that meet Labor and Industries regulations
- **Changes were made to improve the readability of the document:**
 - Rearranging subsections to consolidate related topics into the same section
 - Changing some standards to be performance based rather than to be rigid, specific requirements
 - Clarifying wording, grammar and formatting

B. Stakeholders and Public Outreach Efforts

The Department recognized the importance of having individuals from a broad perspective assist in developing the proposed regulations for the Board's consideration. Therefore, stakeholders and the public have been involved from the beginning of the rule-making process.

- **TA Roundtable:**
A letter of invitation was sent to all TA licensees and interested persons asking for volunteers to serve in an advisory capacity as a member of TA Roundtable. Twenty individuals volunteered to review and comment on early drafts including representatives from industry associations. The early drafts were discussed in three meetings held in the Seattle area.
- **East/West Work Sessions:**
In June 2003 stakeholder work sessions were held in Kent and Moses Lake.
- **On-going Dialogue with SBOH staff:**
TA staff has had an on-going dialogue with SBOH staff to better ensure the Board's concerns are addressed.
- **Department's rule-making web page:**
Draft versions of proposed changes to the TA regulations have been posted on the Department's web page to facilitate stakeholder comment.

C. Identified Issues

Homeless shelters and entering rented rooms for inspection were identified as issues in our discussions with stakeholders. The suggested approach for each issue is:

- **Homeless Shelters**
 - Early in the TA Roundtable discussions, it became apparent that homeless shelters have a different function in the community than commercial transient accommodations.
 - After consulting with SBOH staff, it was decided that shelters should be addressed separately.
 - A homeless shelter workgroup was formed and their recommendations will be presented to the Board at a meeting in the near future.
- **Entering TA Rooms**
 - Circumstances often require DOH staff to enter a TA room(s) to determine the scope and severity of deficiencies or to assess a threat to public health.
 - The statute governing access to rented rooms is vague.
 - The Department, after consultation with Board staff, is recommending that this issue be addressed in Department policy rather than Board rule. The policy will be developed to address both the public health assessment needs for the TA surveyor and to respect for the privacy rights of guests.
 - The proposed rule will require the licensee to cooperate with Department staff in the administration and enforcement of the rules.

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